

CASE MODELING

OR: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love My Beige Computer

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AS far back as I can remember, I've loved building scale models: aircraft, armor, ships, sci-fi stuff....I've built them all. I've even scratch-built a few spacecraft of my own design using spare model parts, sheets of plastic and odd & ends from around the house. I love the challenge of recreating a duplicate of something in miniature, and learning new construction and painting techniques.

Also as far back as I can remember, I've hated beige computers. I loathe their blandness. Even before fruit-flavored iMacs, and grey and silver G4s started showing up, I'd always wanted to do something, **ANYTHING** to spare myself from having to look at another boring, beige computer. But, since I've always had to shell out good, hard-earned Chlorophyll George's to buy my computers, hacking one up, painting it in German splinter camouflage with chrome racing stripes, Iron

Crosses and Betty Page stickers was just something I could never bring myself to do.

But thanks to the modern miracle of dumpster diving, one is able to (with a bit of luck) haul a functional, usable (albeit, probably outdated and obsolete) computer from the brink of destruction and resurrect it in thine own vision, and not have to worry about defacing your hard earned technology investments. So why not have some fun and experiment? After all, it's just garbage, right?

Being a longtime Mac user, I'm quite happy with the way my G4s and iMacs look, and I have no desire to change their appearance. So, when I hauled an old (but perfectly functioning) IBM PC300 PL (Fig. 1) from the dumpster of the state teacher's union HQ building, I knew that it's beige blandness would clash with the rest of the tech in my home. Then the otherwise dim light bulb that seems to hover over my head lit up: this would be the perfect opportunity to take some of the skills and techniques I use in building models and use them to turn this boring, beige desktop computer into something really cool. If anything, it would give me a unique and visually interesting machine to play with Linux on. Thus began my attempt to splice the worlds of model building and computing into one beautiful monstrosity.

With this article I hope to show you how, with a trip to the hobby shop and someplace like a hardware store or Home Depot, some spare model parts, and other junk lying about the house, you can take a boring old beige box and turn it into something to make any Borg Drone turn Luftwaffe Dunkelgrün with envy.

Due to the internal design of the subject computer's case and the time constraints I had in getting this project finished, I limited this case mod project to being strictly externally cosmetic. Using your imagination on your own machine, you can easily go beyond what I did here.

So, grab yer scalpel, don your safety goggles and come up to the lab....and see what's on the slab.....

SAFETY FIRST, AND ALWAYS

Before we begin, most, if not all of the construction and painting techniques I am going to discuss involve sharp knives, potentially dangerous power tools, paints and adhesives with noxious fumes, and many other ways to hurt yourself. I can not stress enough the importance of safety. **ALWAYS** wear eye protection when using power tools, especially when using them on plastic like we will here. Tiny bits of flying heated plastic and your eyeballs, do not a good match make. Also, **ALWAYS** work in a well lighted, well ventilated environment. The glues and paints used have nasty smelling fumes that love to wreak havoc with the human central nervous system. No need for duct tape and plastic here, just some basic common safety sense.



Fig. 1